

643 Because of the mystical values associated with
783 the kingship and centred in the person of the king
he must keep himself in a state of ritual purity, by
performing certain actions and observing certain
prescriptions, and in a state of physical perfection.
Our authorities say that the Shilluk believe that
should the king become physically weak the whole
people might suffer, and, further, that if a king be-
comes sick or senile he should be killed to avoid some
grave national misfortune, such as defeat in war,
epidemic, or famine. The king must be killed to save
the kingship and with it the whole Shilluk people.

- 643 This would seem to be the reasoning behind
783 Shilluk statements that the king may be strangled,
114 or suffocated, or walled up in a hut and left to die
● [766] there, if he fails to satisfy his wives or shows signs
of illness or senility. In view of the great importance
Sir James Frazer and others have attached to these
statements I must confess that I consider them of
interest more as an indication of the mystical
nature of the kingship than as evidence that the
kings were, in fact, ever killed in the ways mentioned
or for the reasons given. It is true that Professor
and Mrs Seligman state categorically that 'there is
not the least doubt that kings of the Shilluk were
killed with due ceremony when they began to show

signs of old age or ill health',¹ but I have failed⁶⁴³
 to find convincing evidence that any Shilluk king⁷⁸³
 was put to death in either circumstance, although¹¹⁴
 some of the kings must have qualified long before
 they died for execution on the grounds alleged; and [766] ●
 I am persuaded that the story of kings being walled
 up in a hut is a confusion arising from the usual
 walling up of the remains of a dead king, the bones
 being buried after decomposition of the flesh. In the
 absence of other than traditional evidence of royal
executions in Shilluk history and in view of the
 contradictory accounts cited I conclude that the
 ceremonial putting to death of kings is probably a
 fiction. It possibly arises from the dual personality [767]
 of the king, who is both himself and Nyikang, both
 an individual and an institution, which accounts
 also for the linguistic convention that a king does
 not die but disappears just as Nyikang is said not
 to have died but to have disappeared, in his case in
 a storm. I will return to this question of regicide
 after I have reviewed the procedures of election
 and investiture of kings to show what light they
 shed on the nature of the kingship.

¹ *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*,
 p. 221; also *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, pp. 90-2. Howell
 and Thomson say (*op. cit.* p. 19) that ceremonial strangulation
 is traditional for all members of the royal clan.

ROYAL ELECTION AND INVESTITURE

643 The phases of the investiture of a new king were
114 excellently described by Mr P. Munro¹ of the Sudan
Political Service, who was an eye-witness of the
investiture of King Fafiti Yor, the twenty-ninth
king, in 1918. However, the recent accounts by
Mr Howell and Mr Thomson, who were able to
make detailed observations on what happened on
the death of King Fafiti Yor in 1943 and on the
election and investiture of his successor, King Anei,
in 1944 and again (Mr Thomson) on the death of
King Anei and on the election and investiture of
King Dak Fadiet in 1945, are descriptively fuller
and analytically more illuminating and are there-
fore followed in the present summary.

643 On the death of a king his corpse is walled for
● 766 some months in a hut and his bones are then buried
in his natal hamlet, and not in the royal capital.

[767] The remains are disposed of, and the mortuary
ceremonies conducted, by royal clients, *ororo*, and
[614] members of the royal clan (the head of which is not
the ruling king but the chief of Fadiang settlement).

¹ P. Munro, 'Installation of the Ret of the Chol (King of the Shilluka)', *S.N. and R.* (1918).

It is more a clan, than a national, affair. The election of the new king, which takes place a few days after his predecessor's death, is, on the contrary, an affair of the whole Shilluk people, who participate in the election through the chiefs of the north and the south, to whom I have already referred. 643
766 ●
[614]

These persons reflect in their roles in the election and in the ceremonies of investiture the structural dichotomy of Shillukland. We have seen that the Shilluk kingdom has a double configuration. political in its territorial setting, in its division into north and south and marches and settlements, and ritual in its religious setting, its arrangement in relation to the cult of Nyikang. In the ritual configuration the dichotomy is represented by the ceremonial division of the country into Gol Dhiang the northern division, and Gol Nyikang, the southern division, which correspond structurally to the political division of the kingdom into Ger, the northern half, and Luak, the southern half, though geographically they are not exactly coterminous. The chiefs of the ceremonial divisions in this ritual representation of the Shilluk polity are also the political chiefs of Golbany and Kwom, the two settlements which are to the north and south adjacent to the capital and cult-centre, 182
631
643

584 had been handed over. When she grew up her father wished to arrange another marriage for her, but was obliged to repay the cow.

586 Mr. Heasty sent the following information concerning the disposal of children after divorce. If the bride-wealth is not returned the children will remain with their father, but if it is returned—and this really constitutes divorce—the husband has to give up the children. The new husband who provides the bride-wealth will take the children and they will become members of his *kwa*. When such lads grow up the true father will often entice them back; this is becoming a common practice, but was formerly confined to members of the *kwareth*.

[593]
848 The position of children born out of wedlock shows the same principle as is seen in the treatment of children after divorce, viz. the importance of the bride-wealth in establishing sociological fatherhood, physiological fatherhood having no legal importance. If a girl has one child before marriage the child belongs to the husband who provides the bride-wealth, which would be the same as if she had no child. But if she has two children then her father would keep them, they would be members of his *kwa* and he would accept less bride-wealth. This, however, seldom happens, as girls are usually betrothed as soon as they reach puberty.

684 The fine for adultery was said to be seven head of cattle—four cows and three bulls—but the number varied, and it may be supposed that the adultery fine would be less than the bride-wealth; three cows and one bull seem a usual fine. Mr. Heasty states that if a girl who is betrothed becomes pregnant by another man the lover will pay seven head of cattle to the father, but the child will belong to her future husband, who has provided the bride-wealth. Unconfessed adultery was said to cause the death of the child.

A fine is paid for seduction, but it seems that many cases that come up for judgment are really those in which a girl betrothed to another man willingly goes to a lover. It must then be decided whether the latter pays a fine or provides bride-wealth and marries the girl.

545 There is no objection to a man marrying two or more sisters, but, unless the second sister is taken in place of the first because the latter has proved barren, full bride-wealth must pass for each.

● 766 Hofmayr states that if a man of importance dies between the time
582 of betrothal and marriage a ceremony having as its object the provision

KINSHIP AND FAMILY LIFE

69

of a wife to the deceased will take place at the grave-side. After this the woman is considered as related to the dead man's family. Later she will really marry, but no statement is made as to whether cattle are exchanged at the grave-side marriage.¹

A Shilluk may have intercourse with the wife of any man whom he calls *uwa*, that is to say, his own brother by another mother, his father's brother's son, or his clansmen of his own generation. He may claim the same privilege from the wives of his own father (except his mother) and of all those men whom he addresses as *wa*. A father will know that his son is consorting with his wife, and will go to another hut and say nothing about it. The attitude of our informants could be expressed thus: "Why should the father object? Surely it is better that his son should do this than go to other women, when he would be obliged to pay the fine for adultery?"

With regard to access to the wife of an *uwa*, a young married man said that if he found that an *uwa* had been to his wife while he was away he might feel very angry, there might be bad talk, but that would be all. The chief would say to him, "He is your *uwa*. It is all right." And he would accept this, whereas if it had been a stranger he would try to spear him. A young unmarried man who was exercising his rights towards the wife of his *uwa* (actually his father's brother's son) said that his *uwa* (the husband) knew, and that he made no objection and was friendly towards him. A child of such a union always belonged to the woman's husband, and any idea of it belonging to the wife's lover was ridiculed.

Any attempt towards intimacy with the wives of *uma*, *umia*, *una*, *aka* or *kwa* would be considered worse than adultery, and it was believed that the partners in guilt would die. Mr. Heasty states that intercourse with the wife of an *ora* would be looked upon in the same way.

About the sixth month of pregnancy a wife leaves her husband—for intercourse should now cease—and returns to her parents' house, where her child is born. Hofmayr states that both husband and wife are "unclean" until a few days after the birth of the child,² while Westermann notes that it is considered shameful for a woman to conceive during lactation;³ if such a thing occurs it is usually supposed to be due to adultery, presumably because conduct leading

¹ Op. cit., 293.

² Op. cit., 271. A pregnant woman is distinctly dangerous; we heard of the death of a child, already ill, whose death was attributed to the visit of a pregnant woman to the house.

³ Op. cit., xxiii.

173 who was so distressed by the stench from his companion's body that
643 he shouted to the people outside the hut commanding them on no
account to leave his successor to die slowly in such a manner.

643 For a long time no public announcement of the king's death is
made, but the news spreads gradually.

766 We could not discover by whom and under what circumstances
the king's body was brought to his birthplace, where he would be
buried and his grave shrine erected. It must, however, be remembered
that Fashoda has not always been the home of the king, for although
it is uncertain how the change was brought about, there is no doubt
that formerly each Shilluk king reigned and was buried in the village
in which he was born and in which his afterbirth was buried. Some
months after death, when decomposition was judged to have proceeded
so far that little but the bones would be found, the hut was broken
down by the *ororo*, a grave was dug, and the bones of the king and
of his companion were placed in it wrapped in the skin of one of the
sacrificed oxen. A hut was built over the grave, and one or two
others put up within the enclosure for the attendants on the new
shrine which had thus arisen. Westermann states that this ceremony
[782] was the public notification that the king had disappeared, and he
[778] describes the sacrifice of a man and woman by drowning; the victims
were bound and placed in a canoe, which with many spears, bells,
beads, and pottery vessels was towed into the middle of the river
and sunk.¹

114 The following account of the election and consecration to the
kingship of the chosen prince is a summary composed from the
accounts given by Seligman, Munro, and Hofmayr.² It does not
pretend to be exhaustive, and where apparent discrepancies occur
in the sources we have generally made use of unpublished information
collected in 1921, or incorporated the details we consider most likely
to be accurate.

643 The interregnum after the king's death usually lasts about a year,
a period of anxiety and uncertainty but which ceremonially should
be long enough to permit of the sowing and considerable growth
of the next season's millet crop, perhaps even of its harvesting. During

¹ Op. cit., 136.

² Seligman, "Cult of Nyakang, and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk": *Fourth Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, vol. 2, Khartoum, 1911; P. Munro, "Installation of the Ret. Chol (King of the Shilluks)": *S.N. & R.*, 1, 1912, 145-52; Hofmayr, op. cit., 145-50. Munro was an eye-witness of the first part of the installation of the present king, Papit, on 17th January, 1918. Westermann has a text dealing with the installation of the king, but this is necessarily short and incomplete.

DEATH AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES 103

DEATH AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES

The Shilluk idea of the spiritual make-up of man is neither simple nor easy to understand. Every living man has both *wei* and *tipo*, the former signifying "breath", "life", the latter "shadow", "image", as in water or mirror. We have already referred to the *cen* of one dying in anger and malevolence (p. 97), and there is a word *aneko*, meaning ghost, i.e. the spirit of one dead. So far we are reasonably certain of our facts, but there may be an element called *winyo* (lit. bird) of whose functions we can predicate nothing. [774] [775]

No death occurred in the villages we visited whilst we were among the Shilluk.

According to Hofmayr, death may be hastened when there is much suffering or if the agony is long drawn out. He states that a prolonged period of immobility of the body is taken for death; the women immediately begin to wail, the dying man is declared dead, his face is covered with a cloth, and the grave is dug.¹ Burial is at full length, a few paces from the door of the house in which the deceased lived. The grave is dug by old men, mostly relatives. A skin is placed in the grave and the body laid upon it wrapped in a white cloth (this is a recent introduction) and covered with another skin. The position of the hands is uncertain; we were told that they were laid between the knees, and also that they were placed in front of the face. Nothing is buried with the corpse, but later a hole is made near and objects placed in it. [763] [764] [777]

Westermann's text, from which the following account is taken, is of special interest as it contains minute details of Shilluk behaviour; it is, however, too long for inclusion and we give only the salient features. It should be noted that his description applies to rich and important men; with a single exception the graves that we saw had no cattle horns on them, and we believe that for a poor man cattle are not always killed. The use of a bier is not invariable:— [766] [565] [764]

When a man dies two fowls are killed, one being placed at the head of the deceased. An ox and a goat are also sacrificed. Beads are tied round the ankles of the men who prepare the grave:—

"The man is buried thus: Some men dig the hole, and some men skin the cow [ox in the early part of the account] . . . the hide is cut into strips, and a bier is [made] . . ., his wife is called, she is to hold the feet of the dead man, and the man is laid on the bier. His wife (or: the women belonging

¹ Op. cit., 299.

- 766 to the family) sweeps the place where his feet lie; and a female relative of the dead man . . . throws away the hearth-stones. . . . A goat . . . is killed . . . the drum is beaten, and the people begin to weep (mourn); as soon as the weeping stops, the people dance mourning dances . . . go around in a procession dancing. . . .

"A fence is made around the grave; the people wash themselves in the river. . . . Oboyo (a plant) is brought, and a fowl, the people are beaten (touched) with the oboyo. . . . The eating-tools of the dead man are burnt, and the people rub the ashes on their forehead; . . . [after] four days . . . beer is made, the beer for rubbing mud on the back of the dead man . . . and poured on the back of the dead man (on his grave). Mud is . . . put on the back of the dead man . . . beer is brought, and again is poured on the grave. The ox is speared; the drum is beaten, the people take their arms and make war-plays, and go around in procession."¹

We may add that after the burial all the people bathe in the river.

- [765] No food taboos are laid on the mourners, who should shave the head, put aside all beads, wear a cow-rope round the neck, and abstain from dancing during the period of mourning. Any milk that has been standing in the house of the deceased is poured upon his grave, as well as some beer. Hofmayr states that young wives or parents bid farewell to the dead before the grave is filled in, and that very emotional scenes are not uncommon.

- 764 Many years ago we witnessed a Shilluk burial at Omdurman. Women bearing spears went round and round the grave, dancing, while other women beat drums and shook bells. Later the men danced in war panoply with spear and shield. Dr. Tucker tells us that on the occasion of a burial he saw a bull chased through the settlement with loud yells and killed outside by armed men, who on their return danced round the grave, making as though to attack it, while the women wailed. About a month after burial people collect for 765 a further ceremony.

Dura for beer is collected from all the people. . . . The beer is strained . . . the drum is beaten. An ox is speared, goats are killed. . . . The next morning . . . four cows are killed in [the house enclosure of the deceased] . . . and four . . . in the middle of the village. Then all, all, all the people come, a great many of Shilluks. When it is afternoon, the people mourn, and four cows are killed by the people in the bush. Cooking-pots are carried out, and a hole is dug for them (and for the other household-things of the dead man) near the place where the head of the dead man lies. And two pots, and a gourd, and a small pot for beer, a mat for covering food, and two dishes, all these things are broken and thrown into the hole. . . . The horns of cattle . . . they are brought . . . they are [placed] on the grave, so that they may be seen by the people. . . ."²

¹ Westermann, op. cit., 112-13.

² Westermann, loc. cit.

THE SHILLUK-SPEAKING TRIBES 105

- 766 *Kwanyireth* are buried in the same way as commoners. We saw an oval mound in one village surrounded by a fence, and were told that it was the grave of a *kwanyireth*. Such a fence is also built round the grave of an *ajuago*; those we saw were in the centre of the village, and it may be that this position was chosen purposely. The wives of the kings, the *bareth*, are buried by the *ororo*, inside their huts (not outside, as commoners are), which though left standing for some time are eventually pulled down. If a king's wife falls ill she will if possible return to her own village to die, and will be buried there.
- 764 Huts of the recently deceased are marked on each side of the door
789 with vertical stripes of white clay of about a hand's breadth, to ward off evil and the vengeance of the deceased.

LITTLE-KNOWN SHILLUK-SPEAKING TRIBES

600 Besides the Shilluk, a number of other Shilluk-speaking tribes exist in the Sudan. Little is known of any of these, though we are less ignorant of the Acholi than of the other peoples. These tribes include the following:—

The Anuak (called Bar by the Nuer) of the Sobat river, extending along the Baro and Akobo rivers into Abyssinia.

The Luo, the so-called Shilluk-speaking Jur. As stated in Chapter I, the use of the word *jur* (Dinka, "stranger") as a tribal name has caused much confusion in the identification of the minor Shilluk-speaking tribes, a confusion which has tended to obscure the ethnology of the whole south-western Sudan. We shall therefore avoid the use of this word, noting that the Luo are the remains of the "greater Luo people" referred to on page 37.

The Belanda, a composite tribe with a Shilluk-speaking section calling themselves Bor (p. 492), whose territory lies to the south and south-west of the Luo.

Westermann mentions a tribe called Ber, living south of the Bongo and east of the Belanda on the right bank of the Sueh river.¹ We cannot identify this tribe, and suspect that there has been confusion with the Bor of the Belanda complex.

The Dembo, whom Westermann places north-west of the "Jur on both sides of the Bahr Dembo".²

¹ Op. cit., 31.

² Loc. cit.

*539 *kaofe yuok. Ka mago gwach yi tere ben. Ka wol, ka wate gen dwai. Ka mago tyen, ka bul gach ki bher. Ka wot chwap, ka dyek nek; ka ja nen. Dyki ka ywogde yuok, la dot dinwen ka nek kal, ka dot anwen neke de (der) fach. Ka tere bing ben ben ben; Chel gir! Ka fen yige bher, tere yuon, ka dot anwen nek ki ful yi tere. Ka puki yech, ka bur gen kwon ki bati wiy dāp. Ka atwal dryau ki hepi ki obir ki fur, ki igimi dryau, ka ge nek ki yey bur. Ka tye dot ka ge kal, kwon fen, ge tye yi tere. Ka yuoke e dāng. Ka kal tote yi rem, ka kal tote yi bat, ka ring pānd bene. Tyen a kwon dāp keli chin, ki wich, ki tyel, ki mut.*

*539
766 When a man dies the people of the village are sent for; a fowl is taken and thrown on the ground, so that it dies; it is then thrown into the corner of the hut. Another fowl is seized and thrown on the ground, so that it dies; this one is put on the head of the dead man. A goat is brought, and beaten to death with a club, and then left in the yard. An ox is brought, and speared. And the people assemble, and the things necessary for burial are collected (from the people). An adze is brought, and a spear, and a hoe, and beads, and a skin-cloth. Then the people go to cut thorns with which to tie together boards (trees). And beads are tied round the feet of the men who do this work. They go and cut thorns, bring the thorns into the village, and give them to the grave-makers. The grave-makers say: "Bring an adze!" When the adze is brought, they say: "Measure the dead man!" And corn-stalks are tied together for a measure; now the man is measured; then they take the measure, and measure the place (size) of the grave.

[804] The man is buried thus: Some men dig the hole, and some men skin the cow (which has been killed). And the hide is brought, and cut into stripes, and a bier is tied together with them, and the bier is put on the ground. The dead man is carried into the yard, his wife is called, she is to hold the feet of the dead man, and the man is laid on the bier. His wife (or: the women belonging to the family) sweeps the place where his feet lie; and a female relative of the dead man is called, she throws away the hearth-stones lying there. A drum is brought, a goat is brought, the goat is killed with a club; the drum is beaten, and the people begin to weep (mourn); as soon as the weeping stops, the people dance mourning-dances. Then the people assembled go around in a procession dancing. Now the burial of the man is finished.

[762] A fence is made around the grave; the people wash themselves in the river, and then go back into the village. Oboyo (a plant) is brought, and a fowl, the people are beaten (touched) with the oboyo. The people go back into the village. The eating-tools of the dead man are burnt, and the people rub the ashes on their forehead; the people now scatter and stay away four days. After that time beer is made, the beer for rubbing mud on the back of the dead

Burial: Inheritance

113

man.¹ An ox is brought, the beer is strained, the beer is brought, and poured on the back of the dead man (on his grave). Mud is carried, and put on the back of the dead man; the mud is prepared (made wet) with water. Again beer is brought, and again is poured on the grave. The ox is speared; the drum is beaten, the people take their arms and make war-plays, and go around in procession. When it is finished, the people scatter.

After one month has passed, the people talk about the mourning-festival. Dura for beer is collected from all the people, the dura is pounded, and the relatives are invited. The beer is strained, and in the afternoon the drum is beaten. An ox is speared, goats are killed. Then the people go to sleep. The next morning the mourning begins; four cows are killed in the yard, and four cows are killed in the middle of the village. Then all, all, all the people come, a great many of Shilluks. When it is afternoon, the people mourn, and four cows are killed by the people in the bush. Cooking-pots are carried out, and a hole is dug for them (and for the other household-things of the dead man) near the place where the head of the dead man lies. And two pots, and a gourd, and a small pot for beer, a mat for covering food, and two dishes, all these things are broken, and thrown into the hole. The horns of a cow are brought ("and the horns of cattle, and they are brought"), they are buried in the ground (on the grave), so that they may be seen by the people. Now the mourning-meeting disbands; one of the families receives a shoulder (of one of the butchered cattle), one receives a fore-leg, and all the other meat is also divided. The people who have dug the grave, receive the bowels, the head, and the feet, and the neck.²

17. Inheritance.

Dūp kən a fō, wəg nāt, ka jānə kwən yī nāl dugi, ka nāl fōp wəgī bēdō. Kā dōk kwən yī nāl dugi bēn, ka nāl dugi w yīgē dēch, kā dōk fānē fō, w yīgē rach, ka dōk kwən yī nāl fōp. Ka gē nāko, ka dōk kwən yī nāl fōp. Tōrō bēnō bēnō bēnō, ka kwəp kōmī, ka ye kīnē: ē, gē wuo, owa a tūōnī; yī chama nē kīti kī dōk? fānē dōk? w bēnō kwor, w chēdō yī kīti? Ka dōk fānē fōrō; ka nāl dugi wēdō mōgē, ka nāl fōp wēkē mōgē. Ka kwəp kōm chyk, ka gē rəp kī dkyil, ka fī kōn fōn, ka gē rēpō. Nāl dugi wēdō mōdēdō, kīfā fōd jān kāl; ka mānōk wēdō nāl fōp. Ka nī bēn kwor gōdē, chēdō, ka nāl fōp ē bēdō, fā chēdō. Nāl fōp dāgē nōmē kī fāchō. Chēdō, fānē fōn.

Tyē gēgē ka owiy jal gū ē bēnō, ka ē kwəp kī akyl, ka omōn ē kwəp kī akyl; nūgē gēn fā mōk jal gū, wəte jal gū, fōp dugi; mayi gēn ē bēdō kī jal dugi; kīnau chēd.

When a man dies, and he has children, his property is taken by the eldest

¹ That is: for besmearing the grave with mud and smoothing the surface.

² Not everybody is buried so ceremoniously as this report tells, but only old, respected or rich people, chiefs of families or villages. — In almost every village one sees the horns of an ox buried projecting from the ground; this is the burial-place of such a man. The *Burial of a king* vide page 128.

*539

waff de nam, ha yoi ng twigb u fi hge ge yijé. Ka yá haan hge yi yoi máñ. ha yoi a tuaye, e mudg ki jé ki yojé. ki jam lén, ha ge tress nam.

*539

●766

643

When the king disappears (that is, dies),¹ his body is laid in a hut. A cow is speared, its skin removed, and cut into strips. When they have finished this, trees are brought, they are hewn with a certain ax, and then they are driven into the earth. With the strips (of skin) they unite these trees to a bier. When the bier is ready, they bring the body of the king — but without the people knowing it — lay it on the bier, and put it in the hut again. The body is adorned with a leopard-skin. Two girls are brought, and are put into the hut, where the body of the king is. One holds his head, and one holds his feet. Each of the girls is given tobacco and a pipe. Now the hut is walled (all openings are walled with mud), so that there is no way for the air to enter. They (the two girls) remain in the hut, and die there. The people wait two months; about this time the worms (who have eaten the flesh of the three bodies) have turned into bugs, and they come crawling out through the roof of the hut. Now (the people know that) the flesh (of the three corpses) is consumed and only the bones remain. Then all the chiefs of the Shilluk country are summoned, beginning from Tongo,² and reaching to Mweme; all, all the chiefs. And they come, each one brings a cow; when they come near Fashoda, they gather these cows at one place; and the cows are speared. Now it is said publicly, "The king has disappeared." And the people weep. One of the cows is skinned, the skin is tanned and made into a bag. The bones of the king are put into this bag; and they are buried in a secret place. But still the mourning goes on, all, all, all the people mourn. And spears are gathered, a great many; they are tied together, and put into a boat; and cattle-bells are put into the boat, and beads, and pots, and dishes, and gourds. And two people are brought, a man and a woman, fine people, they are laid into the boat, they are bound, their hands and their feet are bound; one is laid in the back part, and one in the front part (of the boat). The boat is rowed into the middle of the river, there the boat is pierced, so that water enters into it. The men who row the boat, get into another boat, and the boat which they have pierced, sinks down with the people in it, and all the goods, together with the people, perish in the river.

32. The Man who took the Law into his own Hand.

*539

Jal máñ, ha rí, chugla Bak Dú Jé Bú Dúñg, ha ge gíñg, Bak dñg; wot háñg chugla Oñg. A gupé ki Ayik. Ka ge gíñg ki Bore Nalwakh. Ka wot háñg gíñg háñg, ha háñg yi Ayik ki tñg, há ò gí. Ka Aywíñg chñg yi rí, ha aywíñg máñ, a háñg Ayik Dñg.

¹ Of a king it is not said: "he dies", but "he disappears". — It is said: the king does not die of his own accord, but when he is very old, or sick, and the people think that his death is near at hand, his chief wife strangles him with a cloth.

² — Tongo.

821 When the storm is very severe an offering must also be made. A hoe must
 [782] be placed in front of the door. If no hoe is in the house then a fish
 spear, or something else made from iron, may be used instead. When a
 hoe or spear is thus offered it is taken back to the ordinary uses after the
 storm. In case they can find nothing of iron to offer, one of the inmates
 of the house takes a handful of dura and kneels in front of the door. He
 then turns back the door mat, and, reaching out, he casts the grain upward
 into the air.

342 Sometimes the lightning strikes (mal agoc, heaven hits). In
 821 former times when a house was struck by lightning each house in the
 circle had a rope tied around the apex of the cone-shaped roof. A bit
 of skin from the sacrificed sheep was supposed to be tied to each house.
 Then the houses were all connected by ropes running to these ropes.
 I have seen this arrangement only once. To the rope at the apex of the
 house old bones and snail shells are often tied. They are afraid to move
 the walls of the house that has been struck, and so the walls are pushed
 inward. If someone has been killed in the house the walls form a sort
 of earth covering, as he is not buried as other men. The custom in
 regard to electrical disturbances are changing. Many of the rites now
 practised are borrowed for the Dinkas, but seem to be well established
 at the present time.

342 According to the present usage, when a house is struck, the owner
 782 usually calls a servant of Deñ (Bāñ Deñ). After the servant of Deñ
 821 arrives he surveys the place and then exclaims, "Deñ says bring an ox."
 If the people are poor he may demand a sheep only. He usually adds,
 "I do not ask for this offering, but Deñ asks for it." The offering is
 then brought, it is killed, cooked and eaten in the same place. After the
 meat has been eaten the bones are carefully collected, and a large branch
 from a higlig tree is stuck up on the site of the house. Then the bones
 of the sacrifice, with its horns and tail, are hung on this branch. Each
 guest partaking of the feast is supposed to offer an iron bracelet, and these
 bracelets are also hung on the higlig branch.

772 A person who has had a narrow escape from death by lightning
 821 may become a servant of Deñ (Bāñ Deñ), if he so desires. When they
 travel they say, "Deñ asks for this," and few people will refuse them
 when they beg in that way. In one case a person who dreamed he had
 been struck by lightning became a servant of Deñ.

SHILLUK NOTES

59

When someone has been stunned by lightning, the proper treatment is for two men to take the patient by the heels and, with his head hanging down, to dip his head in water. He is then taken from the water, but continues to hang head downward. After he has been held in this position for some time, snails and frogs will pour out of his mouth, and he will then be restored to health. One man assured me that he had once seen the frogs and snails come from a patient. 752 821

When a person is killed by lightning he is not buried as other men. If his death occurs in a house the walls are pushed down over him, and form his grave. If he is killed out in the open, each person in the village is supposed to bring a bit of earth and throw on him, and thus the grave is formed. It is thought that anyone who refuses to do that will be struck by lightning. 766 821

The person who is killed by lightning is not mourned as other people. The ox that is killed immediately after his death is looked upon as an offering to Deñ rather than as a sacrifice for the dead. The relatives are not to weep for them as they do for those taken by disease. The thought seems to be that the man who is struck by lightning is called by Deñ, and that it is an honour to be called by Deñ, and that weeping and lamenting over such a death would be dishonouring to Deñ. Death by lightning is looked upon as bad, but not as bad as death that comes through disease. The family of the deceased is supposed to be prospered. They feel that the family has made an offering to the higher powers, and they in turn should be blessed by the higher powers for the offering they have made. 782 761 821

When a house is struck by lightning the war cry is given. The men all run to the river with the tips of their spears pointing upward. The spears are waved in imitation of the lightning. This is done so that Deñ will fear and return to the upper regions. Then they run to the boat landing where they throw their spears on the ground. Then each man cuts a bit of green grass. He carries this grass to the fire and throws it on the blaze. Occasionally, instead of running to the river in that manner, they run to the fire with their hands raised as if in supplication, and they give the war cry as they run. 787 821

A day or two after the fire, as soon as the walls are cooled, the people assemble. If no one has been killed in the house, a sheep is killed and cooked and beer is made. After the sheep is cooked, bits are cut from 342 782 821

THE SHILLUK TRIBES

15

being crimes against the community, was that in cases of homicide the murderer (or his brother if the murderer was uncaptured) was compelled to become a *Bang Reti*. 565 644 [662]

Relations between a *Reti* and his retainers were friendly, nor does the treatment of those who were enslaved as a punishment appear to have differed from that of those voluntarily enlisted. The custom was for the retainers of each *Reti* to make a village for themselves near Fashoda. There they would live until the *Reti* died. The *Reti*'s body would then be taken to this village and sealed up in a house where it would remain until entirely decomposed. Only then would the bones be removed by his retainers and buried in his original village. Some of the dead *Reti*'s retainers would then move to the village where he was buried and their descendants would there remain with the perpetual obligation of tending his shrine. Others would remain at their village near Fashoda and would have no further obligations to the memory of their dead patron except that they and their descendants would for ever be known as "*Bang Reti Kiradhker*" or "*Bang Reti Nyakwac*" or as the case might be. 565 644 766 [793]

The retainers of a particular *Reti*, having severed connexion with their own clan, became a fictitious clan in themselves. As such they cannot intermarry, though there may be no relationship of blood. Nor could a *Reti* marry a daughter or sister of one of his retainers. A *Reti* would address the daughter of a retainer as *kuara* (my grand-daughter) which well indicates the relationship subsisting between them. 565 644 [614] [608]

Under the present regime, partly because the Government has frowned upon the practice and partly because the *Retis* are now deprived of their previous source of wealth, the *Reti* has none of these traditional retainers. To-day the *Bang Reti* comprise the descendants of retainers of previous *Retis*. In some cases they have removed themselves to a new locality but in any case they remain for ever *Bang Reti* "A" or *Bang Reti* "B" (in accordance with the name of the *Reti* their ancestors served) and never rejoin their original clan. 177 643 648

When a *Nyirai* was planted out the *Reti* used to send to live with him a few of his own retainers who became *Bang Nyirai* and

PART I.—DEATH AND BURIAL OF RETH FAFITI YOR.

643 Reth Fafiti Yor had been unwell for a month or two before September 1943, but custom did not permit him to acknowledge the fact, or tell people about it. The news of his illness became public early in September. He was being attended by a Shilluk medical assistant, but it was evident that his illness was becoming more serious and was not as simple as had been hoped. In the middle of the month the *reth* was visited by a British doctor, who diagnosed an intestinal obstruction, which might or might not be cancer. The *reth* did not wish to come to Malakal hospital, and the doctor saw no good reason to persuade him. He decided that he should stay under observation for a month. Some days later news began to come in that his condition was much worse; and in the afternoon of the 21st a message arrived in Malakal that the *reth* was unlikely to last the night. In fact, by the time the message arrived the *reth* was dead.

[195] *Piny bugge*—"There is no land—the Shilluk country has ceased to be."

766 The day after the *reth* died he was laid in state in the house in Fashoda where he had passed away. The body lay on a mattress on its right side shrouded in white cloth. Some eight or nine women were fanning the corpse with fans made from the wings of wild geese. [237] The women were the daughters of the *reth* and the daughters of *reth* [283] Fadiet. None of the *reth*'s wives were there. Two small gourds of water were placed by the knees of the body. [644] The part of the house in which the body lay was screened off by grass mats made by the *reth*'s wives some three feet high, and above the mat was a curtain of white cloth, which was drawn aside for people as they paid their last respects. There were no signs of mourning or wailing in Fashoda.

The next night the body of the *reth* was carried secretly to Golbainy five miles north of Fashoda, where it was at once buried in the *reth*'s private village in the house of his senior wife. It is traditional for the *reth*'s body to be sealed into a Shilluk house near Fashoda and not buried for a year after his death. Reth Fafiti on his deathbed expressed

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

19

a wish to be buried at once, as his father *reth* Yor had been buried at once after being executed by the Dervishes. 766

The grave of a *reth*, and of all *kwarreth*, is a shaft dug in the ground with a cavity cut in the bottom of one side to form a vault. After the body is placed in the vault, it is shut off with stakes and the shaft filled up with earth.

Some few days before he died the *reth* was baptised a Christian. It is possible that his conversion affected the ceremonial connected with his death; the absence of his many wives from the ceremonies, and his request to be buried at once and not in accordance with traditional custom suggest this. [717] [717]

The *reth* is looked upon by the Shilluk as responsible for their prosperity, and his strength in their eyes causes the Shilluk, their crops and their herds, and the fish and hippopotamus in their river to increase. In times of famine or cattle plague, at once the Shilluk begin to feel that the *reth* is losing his powers. For two years prior to 1943 the Shilluk crops had been very poor. In 1942-43 the crops were worse than ever, and wholesale deaths from famine were only averted by large scale grain imports by the government. After the previous famine, which lasted for three years ending in 1935, the *reth* had become seriously ill. This time he was an old man, and knowing his responsibilities to the Shilluk, and feeling his physical powers failing owing to his illness, he doubtless lost the will to live, and wanted to die. Whether he was ceremonially strangled, as is traditional for *reth*s and all the *kwarreth*, we do not know, and cannot find out. We incline to the view that, as his death became certain, and he and his family held no further hope of recovery, he was smothered. It would have been unseemly to have held a post-mortem, and other information is not available. It might be put in this way; it is possible that he was "assisted" to die. 643 [731]

After his initial election the new *reth* was soon busy thinking about the wake for Fafiti Yor. Shilluk opinion seemed to think it would not be held for a year after his death, and that the tribal installation 643 716

643
JLL of the new *resh* would follow still later. It was thought that the time of the early maturing grain was the time to hold it. But the *resh*-elect and responsible advisers seemed to think it should be got over quickly: maybe the general quickening tempo of life had something to do with it. It may, and we think this more likely, be due to a desire to get all the ceremonial over without undue delay. For the *resh* had been elected without a fight, and the Shilluk were so pleased that he had been chosen without violence, or the taint of being a government nominee, that they wanted the period of uncertainty cut down as far as possible.

The attendance at the funeral dance was said to be a reflexion on the prestige and the popularity of the late *resh*. This would be an interesting gauge, for the last time, of the esteem in which Fafiti had been held by his people to the end. His prestige had gone through 643 various vicissitudes. He had from the beginning suffered from being a government nominee, and the opposition of the southern Shilluk [648] to his appointment, muted by government action, prevented his obtaining a willing and personal ascendancy over them for many years. As soon as his authority was complete, there followed a period [649] of famine in the early 30's and the attempt by Nyawelo the son of *resh* Kur to assassinate him. This attempt would probably have been successful but for government intervention.

Again in 1936, Fafiti became ill, and the future for the Shilluk was once more clouded. He recovered however, and during his last years his influence throughout the Shilluk country was great, and he was held in high esteem by all his subjects.

766
[627] Near the time of the funeral wake, the Shilluk chiefs and with their men began to collect bulls for driving to Gollbainy to be slaughtered for the dance. There was no compulsion on anyone to do this, but public opinion required that those who could, should help according to their means. On the whole the pressure of public opinion was more insistent upon those who lived near than upon those who lived farther away.

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

21

(P. P. H.)

The funeral dance of the late *reth* was held in his private village on 7th, 8th, 9th of November, 46 days after his death. The dance is known as *wowo* in Shilluk, and is different from that held for other members of the tribe, which is called *ywok*. 766

All arrangements are in the hands of the *kwareth*, and Colo chiefs have no say in the matter at all. At the outset there was considerable argument among the *kwareth* over the form of the dance and the length of time it should last. The new *reth* and the family of Fafiti took one side and some of the *kwareth* chiefs the other. This argument affords an interesting example of how the form of Shilluk tradition becomes blurred from lack of use and the attention which is paid to past precedents. It is worth noting in this context that the dance held in 1913 for *reth* Fadiet lasted for two days only in his private village (i.e. the village where he had lived before he succeeded to the throne), and that he had held no dance at all for his predecessor *reth* Kur, no doubt owing to the circumstances attending the end of Kur's reign. This neglect on the part of Fadiet so angered his successor Fafiti, that he hurled the royal drums into the Nile, refusing to beat them for Fadiet, who had not fulfilled his traditional obligations to Kur, and held the dance with Fadiet's own drums. Therefore the dance of Fafiti had to be held with his own drums, for the traditional royal drums no longer exist (Note 5). The *reth* and Fafiti's family maintained that the proper period for a royal funeral dance was four days in the private village of the late *reth*. Other *kwareth* said that it should be two days only in the village of the late *reth* followed by an optional dance in Fashoda lasting four days at the discretion of the *reth*-elect. It should be noted, however, that this claim goes back to events several generations ago, for no dance was held at Fashoda either for Kur or Fadiet and probably not for their predecessors, who died unnatural deaths during the Turkish administration and the Mahdia. The new *reth* declared his intention of holding a dance of four days at Fashoda after the ceremonies at Pareth Fafiti, but at the last minute the counsel of the *kwareth* must have prevailed, for the 764 182 766

182 dance at Pareth Fafiti lasted three days only, and no dance was held
766 at Fashoda at all.

[64] The duties of organizing the dance and of beating the drums fall
766 to a clan called Kwanyikir, the majority of whom live in the vicinity
of Kodok. They are responsible for discipline among the dancers, and
in particular for keeping unauthorized persons out of the sacred spots.
About two hundred and fifty bulls were slaughtered for the occasion,
fifty of which were provided by the family of Fafiti and the rest by
well-wishers, who included a number of Arab merchants. The dis-
tribution of meat was arranged by Kwanyireth Kir, chief of Fadiang,
who is chief of all the *kwareth*. As he is senile, blind and deaf, he
was assisted by Kwanyireth Bol, chief of Lul and government court
chief of the Fashoda division for the portion of Gol Nyikang.

443 The new *reth* has no special functions to perform, and it was notice-
776 able how careful he was to keep himself in the background. He never
appeared in public while the dances were in progress, and though he
attended on all three days he always went straight to his hut on arrival,
and remained there during the day, and until he was ready to return
[64] to Fashoda. It was obvious that the proceedings concerned the late
reth alone, and it was his son Byawelo Fafiti who acted as host.

631 We had hoped that the form in which the contingents of dancers
766 came in would throw some light on the traditional grouping of Shilluk
sections and former political organization. We had been told by
the *reth* that all sections in the three divisions of Fashoda, Golbainy,
and Detwok would be represented, and no one else. In fact a con-
tingent also came from the Athodwoi division from north of Detwok.
As far as could be seen the size of the contingents corresponded with
the poll tax lists, and from those contingents who did come, very few
warriors could have been missing. In the confusion of the dance it
was not easy to see how the sections grouped themselves, but we got
the impression that the Golbainy division split up into what, in govern-
ment terminology are called "sections," but which tribally are more
like the other divisions which participated. For example the sections

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

23

of the Detwok division came together, and so did all sections of Fashoda division, but the component sections of the Golbainy division split and formed separate contingents. It is probable that there is no deep tradition behind this, but that grouping is largely governed by what is considered a suitable size for a contingent. Lemmo is a small section and could not produce a contingent of its own, so it joined up with Kodok its larger neighbour. It is not clear whether the sections of Shilluk society have any definite traditional function to perform at the funeral wake of a *reth*. The *reth* had originally planned that the four days of dancing should be apportioned as follows:--

631
766

1. Fashoda
2. Golbainy
3. Detwok
4. Fashoda (again).

This arrangement was carried out on the first day, and the dancing confined to Fashoda division, but Nyigir turned up and were regarded as intruders. Next morning, however, everyone else appeared, and the decision was taken to cut the dance to two days only.

766

The late *reth*'s mother (Note 3) was a Nuba woman from near Fungor, which is on the western boundaries of Shilluk country. Some of her relatives arrived on the second day of the ceremony. Naturally they played no significant part, but it is interesting that they should have come at all.

644
648
602

LAYOUT OF THE VILLAGE PARETH FAFITI.

Pareth Fafiti, also called Abwogatho, "fear of death", the village which the late *reth* built for himself, (Note 4) is of medium size and of the usual Shilluk type. There are three cattle byres built round an open space, which is about 70 yards in diameter. The houses are built round the outside of this open space and five of these, in which the wives of the late *reth* reside, had been repaired and the fences round them renewed. The tomb of the late *reth* is the house where his senior wife lived, and in form is no different from any Shilluk homestead except for the eight cross bands on the fence and a stockade of withies outside, which was built after the late *reth*'s burial. This

361

766
778

- 766 homestead, including the stockade, is the form of all tombs of Shilluk
[178] *rsiks*, and also of the numerous shrines of Nyikang which are scattered
throughout the country. Outside the tomb a temporary semi-circular
screen had been erected, and against this the banners of the divisions
were leant and also the spears of the deceased. At the end of the
ceremonies the horns of the bulls which were sacrificed were hung
upon this screen.

The preliminary day of the funeral dance was confined to Shilluk
chiefs. It was said to be a "dance of swords", and only the spears
of the late *rsik*, about thirty in number and carried by his widows,
[411] were brought at all. Those who possessed them carried swords, most
[727] of which had been captured from the Dervishes or the Turks, or bought
[439] from Arab merchants. The sword is not a Shilluk weapon, and it is
[177] probable that they were produced on this occasion to express the
[648] anti-Dervish nature of the ceremonies, an attitude of mind which was
emphasised by the Shilluk songs of hate against the Dervishes, which
on this day and later were sung at frequent intervals. It is difficult
to say why the funeral dance of the *rsik* has associations with their
struggles with the Dervishes, but it may be connected with those
Shilluk *rsiks* who were killed in battle, hanged or died in captivity.
The dances are public, and, apart from the funereal aspect of the
ceremonies, the defensive unity of the tribe against outside aggression
must be made apparent. The tribe is without a *rsik*, who is the symbol
of their unity, and such occasions call for a dramatisation of their
co-operation against external enemies. Those who had no swords
carried millet stalks, which they plucked from the fences in the
village.

At four in the afternoon, the Kwanyikir, after they had set up the
drams (Note 5), walked in procession round them in an anti-clockwise
direction, while the dancers began to collect in the centre of the village.
After a short interval, a white bull was speared, and the carcass was
handed over to the Kwanyikir as a reward for their service. The

SHILLUK MOVIES AND RECORDS.

PLATE II.

THE FUNERAL DANCE OF KATH FADIL.

301
534
766



1.—Shilluk trumpeters with kado horns.

291
534
766
312



2.—The drums of Fadil.

There were six of these set vertically in the ground.

[FACING P. 24]

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

25

drums began to beat, and the dancers, after dancing round the drums, moved off to salute the tomb of the late *reth*, singing the chant of Nyikang. They then broke up into smaller parties, each led by one or more of the important chiefs present, who brandished their swords in the air in front of them. The sons of the late *reth* did not take part in the dancing, but his wives and female relatives were much in evidence, dancing in front of and around the tomb and round the village, carrying the late *reth*'s spears. Each party in turn visited the five huts of the late *reth*, the ordinary dancers singing outside and the chiefs dancing up to the entrances. During this ceremony and on subsequent days, old men and women would often execute *pas souls*, the women with swords or performing the symbol of mourning by casting dust into the air. Some men imitated lions, and old people danced round the byres where the cattle of the late *reth* had been stabled. 766 [535]

After half an hour of dancing the drums stopped, and everyone sat down, but they began again after a short interval and the crowds took up the chant of *reth* Yor. The songs of the other *reths* were also sung, of Fasiti (two in number), of Yor, Kur Nyidhok and Kwathker, and occasionally the chant of Nyikang. Shortly before sundown, the drums were drawn and carried outside the village. The *reth* left for Paahoda and the dancers dispersed to their homes. [533]

THE PUBLIC DANCE.

Early the next morning, crowds began to collect in the village, and women, mostly *baagreth*, danced round the village singing and moving up to the houses of the late *reth* each in turn. No drum was beaten, the women advancing and retreating with a limping stride — one long pace, one short, with the emphasis and weight on the former. Individual women were also dancing around with sticks or with the swords of their husbands. 766 535

The new *reth* arrived at 10.30 a.m. and went straight to his house without appearing in public. Shortly after his arrival the warrior [643] 766

THE FUNERAL DANCE OF REITH FAVITI.
(Second day)

291
411
766
701



3.—A Shilluk regiment enters the village of the late *raik*.

766
516



4.—Crowds squat down in front of one of the houses of the late *raik*.

[FACING p. 26]

- 766 contingents of Fashoda began to come in and marched around the outskirts of the village. The various performances carried out by each group did not vary to any appreciable extent except perhaps in the order. The main events recorded were :-

- [411] The warriors, (Note 6) with shields, spears and sticks, entered the arena regimented with remarkable discipline into their sections.
 703 They first marched round the outside of the village, sometimes kneeling down as a body and beating their shields with their spears. They then moved in procession round the drums, turned to face them and
 [535] danced with a jumping motion in a circle round them, with their spears raised. They then turned to the tomb of the late *reth* and, mingling with the women who were standing outside and singing the songs of
 [644] Fafiti, knelt in homage towards him, sometimes beating their shields and clapping hands in time to the drums. The word *who*, the traditional form of opening a conversation with the *reth*, was repeated by all at certain points in the song. They then arose and advanced round the village, once more visiting the houses of the late *reth* in turn, some of them peering inside the doors as if seeking for him. They then marched outside the village, and another contingent of warriors entered to take their turn.

- 766 Twice during the day, there was a spontaneous panic, and the
 781 crowds fled shrieking from the village. The explanation given was that the spirit of the late *reth* had been brought back by Nyikang and was now in their midst. Hands were clapped to drive the spirit away. The attitude of the Shilluk to this supposed phenomenon is important. There is no doubt that they were seized with fear, and fled as if the devil were behind them, but it was also regarded as a joke, and they all laughed heartily immediately afterwards. This mixture of fear and laughter is also characteristic of their flight from the effigy of Dak, which is described later. The panic was not started by any particular signal except that on both occasions someone heard somebody say "Nyikang has appeared."

The ceremonial dancing performed by the warriors and others, and the panic at the arrival of the departed spirit were repeated without

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

27

obvious variation on the second day, though different contingents took part. On each day, at the close of the ceremonies the drummers whisked the drums from their holes and rushed them out of the village. This was a signal to the dancers to disperse, and they did so with great speed and with mock terror. The spirit of the late *reth* was said to return on the drums being drawn, and hands were clapped by the onlookers as before. On the last day, the holes in which the drums had been set up were immediately filled, and water poured over the spot, and a sheep was brought to the site. This sheep was not immediately sacrificed, but was ceremonially purified and led off to be slaughtered elsewhere.

PART II—ELECTION OF THE RETH.

(W.P.G.T.)

The *reth* of the Shilluk is elected from the body of surviving sons of those previous *reths* who have been properly installed in Fashoda. Difficulties arose in recent elections owing to pretenders seeking the throne, who were the sons of men who, although they were proclaimed *reth* by the government or compassed Fashoda of their own accord, had never been installed by Nyikang.

In 1943 these "illegitimate" lines had died out, and all *nyireths* were genuinely eligible for the position of *reth*.

Apart from the law that all *reths* must be the sons of previous *reths*, there is no other rule governing the election. It is more or less understood now, though not in former times, that surviving lines of *nyireths* take it in turn to provide a *reth*, though we think agreement has to be obtained for this. The families of three *reths*, Fafiti, Fadiet and Kur contained among them some thirty or forty *nyireths* all technically eligible for election excluding infant children of Fafiti. In 1943, the two surviving sons of *reth* Yor were not considered owing to old age (one of them had left the Shilluk country some years pre-

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

35

him no malice, though his election has practically taken away their chances of becoming *reth* in future. All the same there remains potential danger to the new *reth*-elect from an angry or ambitious *nyireth* trying to ambush him by night. No armed rising is now likely, but an individual challenge remains a possibility for the *reth* till the end of his days. ⁶⁴³
⁶⁴⁴

The initial ceremonies are simple, and soon over. There remains an interval for the *reth*-elect, until he is installed by Nyikang. The funeral obsequies of his predecessor are largely arranged by others, though he has a say in fixing dates and procedure. ⁶⁴³
⁶⁴⁶

A final word may be said upon the part played by the intervention of government in this and previous elections. As explained above elections have taken place in 1903 and 1917 in the time of the present government, and before that there was a period of uncertainty, sometimes amounting to civil war during the Mahdia and "Turkia". There is what might be called a "traditional" tendency towards civil war at the time of the election of a *reth*, which is the customary way out of an impasse caused by the disagreement of the two "kingmakers". Since the advent of the present government steps have been taken to get the *reth* elected by peaceful means, in spite of the disagreement. ¹⁷⁵
⁶⁴³
⁶⁴⁸

In 1903 the governor at Kodok himself presided at the election, and more or less dictated the choice of Fadiet as *reth* in place of Kur. Kur had appeared somewhat too oriental in his methods, and it was thought that Fadiet would be more amenable as a government nominee. This proved to be the case, but the fact that he was nominated by government made him of little political importance in the tribe.

In 1917 a disagreement between the king-makers threatened civil war, and the governor had to instal Fafiti and protect him by a detachment of troops. This again detracted from his importance as tribal head.

In 1943 the kingmakers reached agreement, and government

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

73

PART IV.—SEQUEL.

FERTILITY RITES AND RAIN-MAKING.

(i) After his installation the *reth* took a day or two to recover, ⁶⁴³ and we are told that about a week later, a hornless cow, the colour ⁷⁸⁹ of a hippopotamus was sacrificed by the *reth* on the river bank. This ⁷⁸² was done to make the hippopotamus increase, and prosper the Shilluk hunters.

(ii) There was a slight hitch over the rain-making ceremony, ⁶⁴³ which we are informed by Mr. L. W. A. Raven, takes place in the early rains each year. The *reth* is said to slaughter a bull the colour of the rain clouds. We asked the *reth* about this, and he said "Oh, it has ⁷⁸⁹ been done at Fanyikang already by the chief of Kwa Nyikang." Resulting from this departure from custom, after only light showers, one on the last day of the installation, the rains were late, and by the end of June the *reth* was worried. The sequel is interesting. An ⁷⁸⁷ old woman of Lemmo section dreamed of the departed *reth*. This ⁷⁶⁶ showed that his spirit had not been laid to rest properly, and had not the Funeral Dance been cut short by two days? So another and smaller funeral dance of two days duration was held on the 2nd. and 3rd. July, at the same village of Pareth Fafiti. A few days later it started to pour with rain, and continued, so that it was for the Shilluk a year of plenty.

POSTSCRIPT

(W.P.G.T.)

On 6th, April I visited Fashoda on business. Three days ⁶⁴³ previously the *reth* had told me in a matter of fact way that he was going to finish off the party from Akurwa, and give them their dues, and then "they could do as they pleased, but he, the *reth*, was finished with them." Their dues were a head of cattle. By the 6th. I fancied this would all be over, however as I approached I met about six men carrying hides and about ten women carrying household utensils

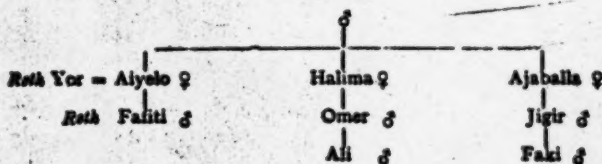
NOTE TO INTRODUCTION.

000

2. Sir Samuel Baker. *Ismailia* p. 102.

NOTES TO PART I

- 644 3. The relationship of the two most important men among the late *reth*'s maternal relatives is recorded below:—



Ali and Faki, descendants of Fafiti's mother's sisters, were present.

- 643 The Nuba of the Fungur area have considerable traditional connection with the Shilluk. The bamboos for Nyikang's body are brought from here, and gifts are exchanged between the *reth* and the local Nuba chief, whom we met at Fashoda some time after the installation when he was being invested with the insignia of a Shilluk chief.

- 643 4. *Reth* Fafiti was brought up in a village in Kodok section, but after 1917 the supporters of Coti Ajang were too numerous for comfort in Kodok section, and Fafiti, in fear of assassination, moved his village to Golbainy and called it Abogathow "fear of death."

- 534 5. The royal Shilluk drums had special houses built for them in Fashoda, and special custodians appointed for them. These drums no longer exist. Shilluk say that *reth* Fafiti, angered because *reth* Fadiet had held no funeral dance for *reth* Kus hurled the royal drums into the Nile, and held the dance for *reth* Fadiet with Fadiet's own drums. For the funeral dance of a *reth* (*wowo*) the drums are stood up on end in shallow holes prepared in the ground, and beaten with newly cut sticks of the *heglig* tree. For other funeral dances, the drums are mounted horizontally upon forked sticks.

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

77

6. *Costumes.* All the warriors wore "war paint", their faces smeared with red, a mixture of brick dust and oil. Hair wigs and leather crests were worn by most men, including chiefs, who had no elaborate head-dresses of their own hair. Skins were worn as well as cloth. Leopard skins were worn, largely by wives of the late *reth*, and by *kwa reth* and chiefs, and the skins of the Mrs. Gray antelope and cob by those to whom they had been presented by Fafiti. An interesting feature was the senior wife, who was clad in the deceased's clothes, his special cloak (*lau*), cummerbund, and sash, and the Scottish International Rugby cap which had been presented to Fafiti by Mr. P. Munro. The cap had aged a lot in the last few years, but has established itself as part of the regalia, and the new *reth* requested that a substitute be found for him for the ceremonies.

NOTES TO PART 3

7. The *reth* could not start without *nyakwer*. Her status and significance are discussed in the text of the fourth day's ceremonies. It is possible that the lateness of the Kwa Okel was due to a conventional reluctance to produce the girl.

8. Important personages in the ceremony, and female relatives of the *reth* or attendants of Nyikang wore the skins of female Mrs. Gray antelope. The *reth* himself wore one on the last two days of the ceremony. The chief of Gol Nyikang was observed on the morning of the first day's ceremonies wearing a black skin of the male Mrs. Gray. He soon changed to a female skin.

9. The *reth* was on a journey, and these were his attendants and his luggage. Nyikang had a similar retinue.

10. The *reth*'s sacred shield is a counterpart to that of Nyikang; like Nyikang's shield it should have been brought from Fashoda, but at the last moment it was forgotten.

11. The Kwa Otwtot may originally have been a clan which has now died out. The prefix indicates an agnatic kinship group. They

FURTHER NOTES ON THE DEATH OF A RETH OF THE SHILLUK (1945)

By W. P. G. Thomson.

THESE notes are intended to amplify the article "The Death of a Reth of the Shilluk and the Installation of his Successor" by Mr. P. P. Howell and myself published in *Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. XXVII, 1946. 121

No attempt is made to describe the ceremonies in full. The general pattern followed that of 1944 and these notes are chiefly concerned with the differences observed on this occasion, and the reasons given by the Shilluk for these differences. It was interesting to observe that in several cases where points of ceremonial differed, the procedure reverted to that of January 1918 described by Munro in *Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. I, 1918.

The disposal of the Body and Soul of Reth Anei.

The course of events was as follows:—

Reth Anei Kur died on November 10th 1945. He had been ill for some days, apparently from an attack of relapsing fever, which was prevalent among the Shilluk at the time; he was known to have a bad heart, and had in fact had a heart attack some months previously in Malakal hospital. A Shilluk medical assistant, present at Fashoda at the time of the reth's death, reported that he died in his arms of heart failure. This is as good evidence as we are likely to obtain that reth Anei died a natural death. 643

I was invited, as in 1943, to pay my last respects to the corpse. This I did on November 11th, and the scene was similar to that of 1943, but simpler. The corpse was fanned by sisters of the reth, and his wives were not in the house with the corpse. Several were observed outside. The reed mats were not so elaborate as in 1943 and there were no cloth curtains. 766

The corpse was not immediately buried, as happened in 1943, but was taken on the night of 11.11.45 to a small hamlet belonging to the village of Fadwol, (the village of the Bang Reth Kur — slaves of reth Kur, the father of Anei) some three quarters of a mile from Fashoda, and sealed up in a hut. These proceedings were naturally secret, and I was not invited to enquire into details. This method of disposing of the corpse was a reversion to tradition: there is no evidence that a [567]

766 maiden was sealed up alive in the hut along with the corpse, which is also said to be traditional.

Fafiti Yor died in September 1943, and his funeral dance was held in November. Anei Kur died in November 1945, and his funeral dance was not held until October 1946. This longer interval was also more in accord with Shilluk custom, which holds that there should be an interval of about a year between the death of a *reth* and the installation of a successor. The installation ceremonies should follow quickly upon the funeral dance for the deceased, and should take place after the harvest is ripe.

Two days before the dance, the remains of *reth* Anei were brought secretly, and by night, from Fadwol to Golluiny where his private village had been, and were buried in his house. The remains were brought by Ororo under the supervision of Gol Nyidhok, the descendant of Nyidhok, the grand father of Anei. The dance took place there and only occupied two days. It was less well attended, and the contingents not so well marshalled as in 1943, but the essential characteristics were the same, and there were the same arguments about how long it should last. The ceremonies were in the hands of the eldest son of the deceased, and of Kwanyireth Hol Aken, the chief of Lul, who had taken a large part in 1943. The chief of the Kwareth, who was senile in 1943, had died in the meantime, but his successor in office, a young man, took no part. The *reth* remained purposely in Fashoda, and did not come to Golluiny at all. It was noticed that, as bulls were slaughtered, the horns and tails were hung on to the palisade surrounding the house where *reth* Anei lay buried, and his bells and other ornaments were displayed by *bangreth* in front of the tomb, spread out upon a bull skin.

The election of *Reth* Dak Fadiet.

643 On the death of *reth* Anei the electoral college were summoned, as in 1943, by Jago Tabo of Golluiny for Gol Dhiang and Jago Yorliker of Kwom for Gol Nyikang, the two great ceremonial divisions of the Shilluk kingdom. The composition of the college was the same as in 1943, except that the chiefs of Bar Nyilic and Owaling Otwa could not attend owing to illness. It was clearer to me than before that the choice rests entirely with the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang. I doubt whether even the chief of the Kwareth has any influence: he and the other members of the college have only to listen to the decision.

643 *Reth* Anei had not lived long enough to adopt a *nyireth*, as *reth*

SUDAN NOTES AND RECORDS

The Death and Burial of *resh* Dak and
FADIET OF THE SHILLUK

By P. P. HOWELL

121 THE following observations are intended to amplify previous accounts of
the death and burial of Shilluk Kings.¹ I was not able on this occasion
123 to follow the ceremonies in detail, for the death of a Shilluk *resh* and the
114 installation of his successor is carried out over a long period with a mass of
[643] ritual observance. I attended some of the ceremonies, had conversations with
some of the participants later and am also indebted to Mr. J. L. Baker, then
District Commissioner of the Shilluk, for much of the information recorded
here.

643 I have assumed in the reader some knowledge of previous publications
766 on the subject. In broad outline the procedure followed may be summarized
as follows:—

- (1) Immediately after his death the body of the *resh* is carried to a village with which he has had previous close association and is there ceremonially inhumed in a special hut. It should remain there for a period which varies between a few months and over a year.
- (2) Meanwhile, the new *resh* is elected in the traditional manner by an electoral college of hereditary chiefs and, unless internal conflicts follow over the choice, begins to prepare himself for his installation.
- (3) The remains of the late *resh* are then removed from the hut and carried to the village of his birth or adoption, and there buried in the house formerly occupied by him. Full mourning ceremonies in which a large proportion of the population play their part follow.
- (4) Preparations for the installation, involving all sorts of preliminary ritual observance and ceremonies, continue and the final stages are timed to take place after the harvest and before the rains.
- 643 (5) The formal installation then takes place and consists of the march of Nyikang (the original *resh* and culture-hero of the Shilluk who is represented in effigy) from Aburwa to Fashoda;

[113] ¹ See in particular: Munro, P., *Installation of the Resh of the Chol, Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. I, 1918; Howell, P. P., and Thomson, W. F. G., *The Death of a Resh of the Shilluk and the Installation of his Successor*, S.N. & R., Vol. XXVII, 1946; Thomson, W. F. G., *Notes on the Death of a Resh of the Shilluk*, S.N. & R., Vol. XXIX, 1946. Also Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nile in Sudan*, Festschrift, 1946, Cambridge University Press.

- 766 Arrangements were made immediately to transport his⁴ body to Fashoda, where he should have died, and a steamer left early the next morning. From Fashoda he was carried to Debwor, a small village nearby which had been expressly made for this purpose and the untraditional manner of his passing does not seem to have caused much comment among the Shilluk themselves. The body was seen by Mr. J. L. Baker, District Commissioner of the Shilluk, on the morning of the 10th and he describes it as being shrouded in white cloth and fanned by his sisters with white goose feathers. There was, in fact, some delay in the preparation of the body, since his death had occurred away from the capital, but after some special ivory bangles had been fetched from Famaadh, he was placed according to custom inside a hut in the village of Debwor. The body was laid on a specially constructed bier (*pon*);¹ a rectangular construction lined on the outside with fish-spears and covered with a white cloth. The hut was then sealed up and large numbers of Shilluk, mainly from nearby settlements, arrived to pay their homage in the traditional manner. The obsequies were completed by the 12th May, and thereafter the electoral college met to elect the new *resh*, Kur wad Fafit.

- 643 It is apparently the *resh*-elect who decides when the reburial and mourning ceremonies (*oworo*) are to take place in close consultation with the kinemen of the late *resh*, for they are materially concerned, and also with the *oworo*² who are largely responsible for the funeral arrangements. In fact there was some argument between the *resh*-elect and the immediate family of the late *resh*. The former insisted that all disputes over the inheritance of the royal castle should be settled before the final mourning ceremonies should take place. During *resh* Dak's illness in hospital, his brother Col and his eldest son Adierg, had taken stealthy measures to hide some of the cattle which, by royal right, should pass to his successor and not to his personal heirs. The decision was made in November and leads me to believe that the prevailing consideration is that the final mourning ceremonies should always be completed by the next harvest, since the installation of the new *resh* should take place shortly after the crops have been gathered.³

The period between death and final burial therefore varies according to the time of year in which death takes place.

¹*pon*: Used only for members of the royal clan and for chiefs.

[767] ²The *oworo*, originally descended from *resh* Oukho and separated from the royal house. They have special functions to perform at the burial ceremonies and installation of a *resh*. See Howell and Thomson, *idem*, p. 8, and Pumphrey, *The Shilluk Tribes*, pp. 12-14.

³On this subject see Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 127, *et seq.*, and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

A [c. 1945] Fashoda - Analysis

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF RETH DAK WAD FADIET 159

Preparations then began at the small village of Kujo in the settlement of Fanyidwai Pac in the southern Shilluk area. This village had been built by Dak Fadiet himself when he moved from his mother's home in Fathwara at the invitation of Awanydrek Oew wad Agang of Falo and was occupied by him from the age of about seventeen until his accession. The word *Kujo* means literally, "I do not know" and apparently referred to his ignorance of the future and whether he would become *retk* or not, but expressed his pious hope.¹ Within this village two huts were built by him and known as his *gal dwang* (great house) and occupied by him when in residence. This is common practice with all Shilluk kings and the *gal dwang* eventually becomes the *hangs*, shrines or tombs, and is always sited in the village of their birth or adoption. These huts were fenced around in the manner of all royal shrines in preparation for the burial. These preparations were carried out by the kinsmen of *retk* Dak under the general supervision of the *owro*. Yet despite his wishes, which were well known, his son Adiang caused further trouble by insisting that his father should be buried in the village of Pa Loc in Famaadh with which he had had close associations. He went as far as to waylay the *owro* when they were carrying the *jankwer*, sacred objects, in particular the embouch seat (*kwow*) used by the *retk* and in which his spirit was said to be, to Kujo, upon which Fanyidwai, the division in which Kujo is situated and where *retk* Dak was brought up, rose in arms and only the timely arrival of the chiefs of both areas prevented a clash. It was generally accepted that Adiang was quite wrong in assuming that his father wished to be buried at Pa Loc, which would have been untraditional, and his motives are obscure.²

1 I have heard since that Kujo, as a hamlet, was not built until after Dak had been elected. The name Kujo therefore captures his feeling of uncertainty before his installation at Fadiet.

2 I am indebted to Father W. Hurst, of the Mill Hill Mission, for further information on this incident. Apparently it is customary for the late *retk*'s embouch seat (*kwow*, but to be distinguished from the sacred seat, also *kwow*, used at the installation ceremony) to be carried to the place where his remains will finally rest almost immediately after his death. The *retk*'s spirit is manifest in this seat and it is often spoken of as the *retk* on this occasion. In the case of Dak wad Fadiet, the seat was carried from Fadiet to Famaadh where it was placed in a hut which (by the people of Famaadh) was reckoned to be his future tomb. The procession was accompanied by villagers on its way, each settlement turning out to follow as far as their boundaries. During the next few days, people from all sides marched to Famaadh, he *homo retk*, "to visit the *retk*." Here soon reached the people of Fanyidwai, who descended on Famaadh in force and carried off the seat and other sacred objects. In their haste, some of the sacred beads were upset on to the ground which was considered a misfortune, at any rate by the people of Famaadh. It appears then that these objects must be carried to the *retk*'s final resting place and where they rest, there he will be buried. *retk* Dak had always shown particular favouritism to Famaadh and Pa Loc was regarded as his personal village. The custom that the *retk* should be buried in the village where he was brought up, however, appears to have prevailed.

766
[722] The *ovoro* then went to fetch the body from Debwoz. The remains were put in a special bag made from the hide of a cow-calf sacrificed for the occasion and wrapped in white cloth and the party set out for Kujo, travelling by night and with an advance guard who were enlisted to seize small gifts and ransoms from those unfortunate enough to cross their path.¹

[782] On the arrival of the party at Kujo an ox was sacrificed as *ashak* (a sacrifice to allow them to enter the village) and the remains of *resh* Dak were brought into the *gal dwong*, by now transformed into his *kango*. The grave was then dug inside one of the two huts² and on the second day *baglig* wood (*Balanites aegyptiaca*) was cut and a new bier (*pam*) was constructed, bound with leather thongs taken from the hide of the ox sacrificed as *ashak*. On this afterwards the chief (*jago*) of the *ovoro* came out singing the song of Nyikang which is the usual signal for the start of public ceremonies and the song was taken up by those outside. On this occasion the crowd proceeded to the river to bathe themselves. Apparently the spirit of the *resh* himself had appeared to one of the *kangroth* in a dream and had demanded that this untraditional rite of purification should take place.³ After this the duties of the *ovoro* were completed and the *kwa* Nyikar took over. *kwa* Nyikar came from Fadong north of Fashoda and are specifically concerned with the funeral dances of Shilluk *resh*.⁴

[782] ¹ Fr. Harvi informs me that they travelled fast but not for long distances. They rested for the day at some village where a bull was sacrificed. Only a small party travelled with the *resh*'s remains and it was noticeable that the people kept out of the way. At every large watercourse a sheep was sacrificed, again called *ashak*. The word is derived from the verb *ashak*, "to cross over."

[782] ² I was not present at Kujo until late, and had I been there, I should not have been allowed to witness the actual burial. The procedure was described to me later and I can only give the bare outline of what happened. I was informed that the grave is of the usual Shilluk pattern—a straight six-inch with a side chamber below, in which the body is placed lying full length on the right side.

[772] ³ I was unable to discover where this idea originated and whether it had any special significance. I suspect Christian associations since *resh* Dak had been educated for three years at the elementary school at Deleth Hill (American Presbyterian Mission) and had retained links with them.

[772] ⁴ Nyikar. "Children of the Nile (Kil)." Tradition relates that these people are not Shilluk in origin but were found by Nyikang at a place called *Potho Nya* ("the lion country"). Nyikang was attracted by their drumming. On Nyikang's approach they fled into the river where Nyikang captured them and made them his drummers, their specific duty being to beat the drums at the funeral wakes of all subsequent *resh*. I am indebted to Mr. J. L. Baker for this information.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF RETH DAK WAD FADIET 161

Just before dawn they set up the four royal drums on end in holes specially dug in the ground² and in the centre of the village opposite the *Arepe*. They were beaten for a short while as a signal that the public ceremonies of mourning would begin that day. In addition a fire was lit using fire sticks (*pic mar*), an important ritual item in any Shilluk ceremony, and a sheep was sacrificed. [766] [533] [712]

I reached Kujo that afternoon just in time to see the *Are* Nyikir enter the village again, singing as they came and carrying the spear of Nyikang wrapped in white cloth and also a basket which I was told contained certain sacred relics including the bell of Nyikang (*arek Nyikang*). The party stopped over a sheep held to the ground in front of them³ and then took up their position round the drums. [718]

Meanwhile an ox had been tethered near to the drums and a Shilluk warrior stood by, spear in hand. At a given signal he plunged his spear into the ox, missing the heart, and causing only a slight wound in the haunch, with the result that it broke away and had to be despatched outside the village. No particular attention was paid to this unfortunate incident which might have been regarded as an ill omen, and immediately the drums began to beat, the *Are* Nyikir skipping round them four times and again stopping on to and over a sheep tethered to the ground. The main body of spectators consisting of important persons and the occupants of Kujo and neighbouring villages then entered the arena. These people carrying millet stalks, sticks and swords, but no spears, danced round the drums in an anti-clockwise direction singing the song of Nyikang followed by that of *arek* Dak Nyikang and finally a new song composed in honour of the deceased. After several minutes of dancing in this manner, the crowd moved forward and knelt facing the shrine clapping their hands as a sign of grief. These royal mourning songs reflect the Shilluk's attitude towards their kings. *Agwet wad Nyidhongo piny apuk eis Yar wad Nyidhongo labo arieny*, "Agwet wad Nyidhongo, the earth is [712] [718] [535] 533 534 766

² These holes are specially dug beforehand and bells and other sacred objects put beneath the drums. For normal social events Shilluk drums are laid horizontally or lean against supports set in the ground. [534]

³ The significance of this act is not clear and Shilluk merely say that it must be done; it is "according to custom," *Areng*. I have, however, frequently heard it said that the act, *chak*, is intended to remove impurities which might be harmful to the rock. The procedure is followed in all sorts of ritual situations in which the rock is concerned. It will be remembered that the rock steps over a bull-calf when he leaves *Detoko* and over a black bull at *Arepejar* on his way to *Fachoda* on the first day of the installation ceremony. It will also be remembered that in the old days, prior to *arek* Fadiet, a man (and a girl) was sacrificed to the same treatment as the bulls and sheep, and, though it is not true that he invariably died in the process, he was never allowed to come into direct contact with the rock. See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 54 and p. 79, Note 21. [613] [783]

533 destroyed, Yur son of Nyikhang, the country is ruined," is one of the main
 537 refrain of the song of Yur. Other songs refer to the immortality of their
 540 reth. Of Dak, son of Nyikhang, we hear that he only vanished, he did not die.
 [775] Of Kwirikin, who was killed in battle against the Dervishes at Jebel Gadir,
 they sing, *Kurjang (Kwirikin) ci kany abai the yimang kardi the wadi nini*,
 [777] "Kurjang the fierce one, when he went out to die he did not fear, fierce one,
 death is only sleeping."

766 Warriors from the surrounding settlement of Fanyidwal Pac then entered
 in battle order, carrying their shields and spears. After a preliminary search
 [572] round the arena, spears and shields were discarded and only sticks and millet
 stalks carried. This is usual at Shilluk public ceremonies. Dances continued
 for three days, men of Fanyikang, Demin, Pakang and Malakal attended
 and the procedure was not different. Over two hundred and eighty oxen
 were slaughtered for the occasion, the tails and some of the horns being hung
 on the fence surrounding the camp, while the meat was consumed by the
 participants.

[773] On the final day, after a great show of dancing and further sacrifices, the
 ceremony of purification known as *dango* (or *Yaf*) took place. The *hangreth*,
nyiveth and also many other kinsmen of the late reth were conducted by the
oroso into the center of the village, where an ox was sacrificed while they sat
 round in the center. According to strict Shilluk custom, this should have
 [777] been followed by a general shaving of heads. In fact, they did not do so,
 [52] possibly because the ritual bathing in the river was considered sufficient
 purification. No satisfactory explanation for this deviation from custom was
 forthcoming. It is worth mentioning also that the *chak* nose, *lariine*, and the
bilo (or *gal pi*) bath place, of the late reth, which are attached to the *gal dwoing*
 and used by him in the past, were found off and guarded. Anyone approach-
 ing them was seized by the *oroso* and made to pay a small fee.

603 The reth-elect, Kar wad Fadil, was present on the first day of the *wono*,
 as a gesture of respect to his predecessor, for it is not necessary for the new
 766 reth to be there and he never appears in public. In particular he may not
 see the relics of Nyikhang carried by the *Aw Nyikir*, for these are associated
 with the death and burial of a reth, not with the living.

766 The *Aw Nyikir* then set out for Debeze where a similar ceremony was
 to be held for the northern Shilluk. I was not myself present and am
 indebted to Mr. J. L. Baker for the following account.

"On November 21st, the *oroso* and *Aw Nyikir* had returned to Faidir
 for the final act in the obsequies of reth Dak and arrived there after several
 days spent on the road. At about 4 p.m., as at Kajin where the actual bodily

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF RETH DAK WAD FADIET 163

remains of the *reth* had been buried, the *Awu Nyikir* took the field in front of four upturned drums. These drums were either those of the village of Debwor or had been borrowed from nearby villages. The anti-clockwise procession of the *Awu Nyikir* then began, each of them hopping over a gourd (*Awu*) which was produced as a substitute for a sheep which is normally used on these occasions. The drummers, led by *Jago Bol*, their chief, then took up their position round the drums and began to beat them. At Debwor there was no ritual lighting of fire (*jié*) by fire sticks as at Kujo and which had preceded all ceremonies relating to the election of the *reth* and the burial of the old one; possibly the spirit of the late *reth* had left the place. As the drums began to beat, the chiefs of *Gerr*—with the exception of the chief of *Muemo* who was in charge of the arrangements for the installation then being made at the shrine at *Akurwa* and had not come—began to dance with the shuffling gait of a religious dance (*yieko* as opposed to social dances, *cong tupo*) and finally all went up to the hut in which the late *reth's* body had lain for so many months and sang songs to *Nyikang* outside it just as the chiefs of *Lusk* had done outside the burial hut at *Kujo* and an ox (*nyijak*) was speared as a sacrifice. The purport of this song was "we have asked for cows but instead you have beaten us; please restore to us our cows this time." This presumably meant that they were asking for better treatment under the new *reth*, for *Dak wad Fadiet*, "the scourge of *Nyikango*," had been a most unpopular figure outside his own area. [766] [535] [533] [539] [643]

With this, the important ceremonies were over and the march of the clans followed. The sections which participated were *Both*, *Bol*, *Nyingaro*, *Pabor*, *Agodo*, *Biu*, *Thwolong*, *Yony*, *Lul*, *Fashoda*, *Nyigir*, *Golbany*, *Fadheiang*, and *Lemo*. This took two days. *Kodok* and *Golo* did not come, possibly because they were too much in favour of the house of *Fadiet* and had never supported *Dak*. Thus the pattern of this ceremony in *Gerr* followed closely that which had been performed in *Lusk* at *Kujo*, only there was no body to bury. The predatory *owro* had little to do except the unpleasant one of taking up the bier and skins on which the *reth's* remains had previously lain and rotting and burying them inside the hut and of guarding the sacred mound outside the hut. I had thought that this hut, where the body of the late *reth* had been immured, would be broken down when the remains had been brought out to carry to *Kujo*, but this was not so, and the *owro* had the ghastly task of breaking down the door and collecting the remains into a presentable bundle while the house was still standing. The hut was still in good condition and will not be broken down until later, when the *bangvrik* *Dak* will level the hut to ground, though they will continue to occupy the rest of the village as formerly. [614] [767]

- 766 This superficial account of the death, burial and mourning ceremonies of the late *reth* Dak wad Fadlet adds a few further details to our records of previous burials.¹ There was no fundamental difference in the procedure, but it is worth noting the following points:—

[83]

- (i) *reth* Fadlet wad Yor, who died in 1944, was not placed in a hut for any time, but was buried almost immediately in his personal village.² At the time it was said that since his father Yor had died and had not been thus immured, it was correct that his son likewise should be buried immediately. Past precedents are always deemed important by the Shilluk, even to the extent of altering established custom.
- (ii) In the case of his successor Anet wad Kur, the body was first laid in a hut at Fadwol, a village occupied by the slaves and dependants of his father Kur and was finally buried at Golbalay in his personal village. This was considered a return to normal custom. Both these villages are in the northern Shilluk area (Gerr). Mourning ceremonies were carried out at both, but there was no equivalent ceremony among the southern Shilluk.
- (iii) It follows that the *wono* ceremonies carried out for Dak wad Fadlet, first at Kujo in the southern Shilluk area (Lush) and then at Debwor in the northern area (Gerr), were dictated by his previous residence and not by any demand for a repetition based on this division of Shilluk country as might be expected.³
- (iv) It appears, then, that what might be called the "lying in state," should take place in a village built near to the capital and built largely for the purpose. The burial should take place in the original village of the late *reth*, the home of his mother, or more often the home of his adoption.

[643
591]

¹ See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 18 *et seq* and Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

² Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6 and p. 75.



PLATE 16. The *ama* Nyikir entered the village of Kujo, after stepping over a sheep held to the ground.



PLATE 17. They entered the village, singing and dancing, with the spear of Nyikang wrapped in white cloth, and the basket containing sacred relics.



PLATE 18. Meanwhile an ox had been tethered near the drums, and a warrior stood by, spear in hand, ready for the sacrifice.



PLATE 19. After several minutes of dancing, the crowd moved forward and knelt before the tomb.

CP 164 (a) 7

THE ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF RETH KUR WAD FAFITI OF THE SHILLUK

By P. P. HOWELL

With an account of the final ceremonies by J. O. Udal

IN a previous article¹ I described the death and burial of reth Dak wad Fadiet who was installed at Fashoda in January, 1946 and died in Malakal in May 1951. I explained that the events and ceremonies which took place would be treated separately, but that the death of one reth and the installation of his successor is all one process in which the soul of Nyikang, the founder of the Shilluk dynasty, passes from the old to the new. The period of the interregnum is full of dangers for the Shilluk people: *piay wagon*, "there is no land," the Shilluk say. The prosperity of the people is dependent on the position in society of the reth: he is the symbol of unity and national order and is further responsible for the control of natural phenomena for the benefit of his subjects. Such divine attributes are not automatically acquired by the newly appointed reth: he can only acquire them by careful observance of all the rites and ceremonies necessary to assure the transfer and to confirm him in his position. Each stage in these ceremonies is therefore another crisis passed both for the reth himself and for his people. It is a further step towards the re-establishment of former stability and only when he has been finally installed at Fashoda is there a return to normal. This state of affairs is manifest at every point of the proceedings which throughout so vividly display these concepts.

The events may be divided as follows:

- (i) The death and "lying in state" of the late reth during the period, often several months, when his body lies in a hut in a village specially prepared for the purpose. [76]
- (ii) The election of his successor.
- (iii) The actual burial of the late reth's remains in the village of his birth or adoption and the final mourning ceremonies called *in* Shilluk words. [76]
- (iv) The ceremonies which culminate in the actual installation of the new reth in the Shilluk capital of Fashoda.

These events have been described in some detail in the case of Fafiti wad Yaw who was installed in 1917 and died in 1943, in the case of Anai wad Kur who succeeded him and who died in 1945 and of Dak wad Fadiet who succeeded Anai and died in 1951.²

¹ *The death and burial of Dak wad Fadiet*, S.N.R. Vol. 33 Part 1.

² *Mason, P., Installation of the Reth of the Col.*, S.N.R. Vol. 1, 1918. Howell, P. P. & Thomson, W. P. G., *The death of a Shilluk Reth and the installation of his successor*, S.N.R. Vol. 27, 1944, and Thomson, W. P. G., *Notes on the death of a Reth of the Shilluk*, S.N.R. Vol. 29, 1948.

776 the chief of the district offers a sacrifice to Nikawng so that the rains may
772 come. After the prayer has been offered, and the rain comes, if it comes
724 with a rushing sound they say that Nikawng walks in the storm, and the
rushing sound is made by his passing.

643 Once the departed king returned so that he could be seen by the eye of
766 man. The first kings did not die, but ascended. At last a time came when
775 the kings were to be identified more fully with the people, and they were to
776 be buried. The proper burial of the first king to receive that attention
from his subjects, was of such great importance that Nikawng returned to
give minute instructions as to how the king should be buried. Some say
that he actually appeared in the flesh. Others say that he appeared to a
certain old chief in a dream, and made known to him how one of his kingly
descendants should be buried.

776 At certain times the old woman, who has charge of his sacred house
778 places food in it for him. At the time of new moon the food is placed in his
782 house, and may be offered to him one day, or four days. Very early in the
772 morning the food is taken out, and eaten by the attendants. They say that
Nikawng has tasted it. Should the offering entirely disappear in the night
it would be taken as a serious omen. Milk is also placed in the house with
the food. Should the old woman keeper of the sacred house dream of the
king during the month, she places an offering of food in his house.

643 Similar offerings are made to the other kings, and also they may be
777 made to an ancestor.

776 When the harvest is beginning, before the people may eat of their grain
782 they must take an offering of their first fruits to Nikawng. After Nikawng
has been given his taste of the first fruits the people may eat freely. An
offering of the first fruits is also taken to each of the sacred houses of the
other kings.

769 Many of them take an offering of the first fruits to the grave of an
ancestor, usually the father. When offering to a father the grain is made
into a sort of batter, and poured out on the grave. The man then says that
he has given his father a taste. The worship at the family shrine dies out
when the immediate family is all gone. In the case of the kings it is kept
by all the people.

775 The power of Nikawng is upheld to some extent by a class of religious
777
776
778

755 to keep the disease from entering. The mother is warned against looking back.

[753] When a child cries persistently, with no apparent cause, they reach the conclusion that he is being drawn by one of the kings. The servant of the king is called, and given a fee of a sheep. The parents say they want to know, who is drawing the child. The first thing to do is to take cowrie shells, and string beads on them. Each shell has a different coloured bead. The shells are named for their kings, and also for the deceased grandparents of the child. One shell is also put in for the child. The shells are all taken in the hand, and thrown out on a skin. When they fall if another shell touches that belonging to the child, it is being drawn by the spirit of that king or person. The child is then given the name of the person drawing it, and a cure is effected. If at the first attempt no one is indicated the test is repeated until some one is indicated. All the people in the room then cower, and pray to the drawing spirit as the leader directs.

756 The servants of the king claim the power to converse with the dead. When a spirit is to be called the medium goes into the house with the relatives. She goes to one corner of the room and retires behind a screen. The door is closed to make the room dark. She then takes a gourd with some grain in it and twirls it to make a noise that will call the spirit of the departed. The spirit of the king then takes powerful possession of the medium, and she speaks in a peculiar voice. The usual thing is for the spirit to greet the assembled people, and they reply. The spirit then says: "Where I am it is nice, but I was killed by a certain person (naming him) or I would not have died." The death was caused by a charm cast on the victim. "I will kill that man, do not quarrel with him. When I finish greeting you I will return." Sometimes such a message causes the relatives of the deceased to try to kill the one who cast the charm.

[761] An instance of their working is often given in this community. Two men made a trip to the Nuer country. On the return trip one of them, 756 named Shol, was separated from his companion. The other man concluded 766 that he had been killed by a lion, and returned with that report. The people of the village mourned him as dead, but they waited two months. Then a servant of the king was called. She went through the usual forms, and then exclaimed: "Ah the man". The spirit greeted the people, and

they made answer. The spirit then said : « I was eaten by lions, the lions were two, had the lion been one I would not have been eaten, for you know me, that I am strong ». The people replied : « We know that you are strong ». He continued : « I am sorry for my mother only ». At that she wept. They beat the drum, and he said « I return ». His brother alone doubted, and said : « My spirit is strong, my brother lives ». He was chided with unbelief. The next morning they buried a wooden effigy of Shol, and had a mourning dance for him. In the midst of the dance he returned, and wanted to know who had died that they were mourning. The dance was stopped. The medium was humiliated, and refused to attempt to work in other cases.

Such cases as the foregoing are usually treated by the women. The men servants of the king treat the river sickness. The patient with two sheep is taken to the river. The sheep must be male and female. The head of the male is put under the water. It is then taken out, and its four feet tied together, with its head between the front feet. The healer then puts it into the river, and as it is carried off by the current it takes the sickness with it. The female sheep is the fee of the healer. They then go to the village and kill a sheep for a feast.

When a servant of a king begs he says : « The king is begging you », and if his requests are modest they are granted.

In death the servants of the king are honoured by the same kind of burial as is accorded to a chief.

They look upon it as a form of spirit possession. The spirit is good, or at least not as malignant as some of the other spirits that may take possession of a person. A failure in no way lessens their power, as the people are sure that some other healer would have been successful. While a successful cure brings great glory to the healer.

This class typifies a longing of the native mind. They are seeking some power to bridge the gulf between the finite and infinite. The power that belongs to God is to pass to the king, and then by his spirit to be given to his servant, who is to use it for the good of the people.

The mediums prey upon the people. Often they seem to be sincere in the belief that they have the power claimed, though just as often they seem to realize that they are deceiving the people.

Shilluk Government

57

The body of the dead king, wrapped in a white cloth, lies in state in his capital of Fashoda. During the course of the second night it is taken secretly to a nearby village for temporary interment, for by tradition the body is not to be buried for about a year after the death of the king, but is placed in a hut which is sealed up. Traditionally, too, the youngest of his wives should be sealed up alive with him, and the hut allowed to fall into ruins and thus form a tomb for them, but happily this dreadful custom is no longer practised. 766

After an interval of about a year, the remains of the dead king are removed from their temporary resting place and taken, again by night and with secrecy, to his own village where they are buried in a grave dug in the floor of a hut. This is a signal for the people from all over the country to come in for the funeral dances. The number of people who attend the dances is indicative of the popularity that the late king enjoyed among his subjects, and so too is the number of cattle sacrificed. This may run into several hundreds, some of which are contributed by the family of the deceased, but most being the tribute of chiefs and people. The meat of the slaughtered animals is distributed among those taking part in the funeral ceremonies. [78]

Two or three days after the king has been buried, on a day appointed, the warriors armed with spears and war shields and in well-ordered companies, each headed by a flag bearer and marshalled according to the district from which they come, encircle the outside of the village, singing songs in praise of Nyikang and the late king. They then enter the village and dance round the drums and the tomb, stopping at a concerted signal to kneel in homage to the dead, facing the tomb, clashing spear on shield and addressing funeral chants to the king. Once more they encircle the village, this time on the inside, visiting each of the late king's huts in turn, some stepping out of the ranks and peering into the empty huts as though searching for the king and then retiring to give place to the next contingent. Thus the funeral ceremonies continue for two or three days, but 535
766
[533]
[533]

- 766 at length the drums cease to throb, the last of the animals
535 are sacrificed and the meat distributed to the dancers and
the people disperse to their homes. The king is dead. . . .

643 The country has not, however, remained without a king
666 all this time. The period of interregnum is one of disquiet,
[642] and there is always the real fear that one of the nyireth may
[669] make a bid for the throne. As soon as possible, then, after the
king's death, within a few days in fact, the electorate council
meets to choose the new king. This council is made up of
eleven chiefs of the Colo, the descendants of the original
companions of Nyikang, and three members of the royal
houses.

[175] When Nyikang first settled the country he divided it into
[631] eleven major districts, appointing a chief to each. These
chiefs were all Colo since, as Nyikang was the first Reth, the
Kwareth had not then come into being. These eleven chiefs
form the board of electors, and with them sit three of the
[614] Kwareth, one from each of the three royal houses, those of
Papiti, Fadiet and Yor, whose sons are eligible for the king-
ship. Among these three families there may be as many as
forty or fifty nyireth, entitled as such to consideration for
the vacant throne. It is generally accepted, however, though
not a hard and fast rule, that the three royal families should
provide a king in rotation, and it is certainly understood
that the family of the late king is automatically ruled out.
Attention is therefore concentrated on the claims of the
candidates from the other two houses, with the weight of
opinion in favour of that one which has the more remotely
provided a king. Many of the nyireth are eliminated at once
on account of old age, extreme youth, physical debility,
weakness of character, etc., and the merits and demerits of
the rest are given serious consideration, until the number is
reduced to half a dozen or less from among whom the final
choice is made. How selection is finally made is the secret of
the council. Sometimes the late king may have 'adopted' a
certain nyireth, and thus indicated his wish in the matter of
his successor. Such an indication does not mean that the
king's protégé will certainly be chosen but it will have great

Shilluk Government

67

Sacrament he was receiving. He was not unmindful of my needs and sent word that food was to be prepared for me. I was taken into another house—a very special one into which few but the king and his queens enter. A woman brought me a skin to sit on and then, on her two knees, presented me with roasted maize cobs and native beer. I was in very great need of a drink for though we had waded through lots of water we could not drink it; if we did, dysentery was sure. This special house contained a very fine collection of animal skins and also the spear of Nyikang, a thing most sacred to the Shilluk. There also was a stick on which were recorded the years of the king's reign. I was sent a wing of a saddle-billed stork to use as a fan and these are, as a rule, reserved to the king himself.

At two in the afternoon I said good-bye to the king who made me a further present of a goat, and I set out for home. King Joseph, as he was now, had very thoughtfully ordered an ambach canoe to be brought so that I could cross a very deep swamp on a path that made our journey much shorter. I was feeling very tired, and every mile my feet felt like lumps of lead—the last mile seemed very long. But I arrived home about five o'clock and I announced in church the good news that the king was baptized and all the Catholics of the mission rejoiced. There were no hostile remarks from pagans that I ever heard of. King Joseph, formerly Papiti, died on September 22nd.

By King Papiti's express wish the customary temporary interment was not proceeded with, and on the night of the day following his death, he was taken to his own village of Pareth Papiti (Village of King Papiti) and there buried. The traditional funeral dances were held in his honour, but took place much earlier than usual, only about six weeks after his death.

763 sound that is prolonged for about ten minutes and is renewed at intervals during the day as relatives or friends of the deceased arrive for the funeral.

[166] I have said previously that the Shilluk are fond of wandering from their own villages. They will settle and live for years at the other end of the country, perhaps among the people of another tribe or in another province. But no matter how long a man has been away from his own people, he will always endeavour to return to die among them, and if he should fall ill whilst away from home he will try to let his kinsfolk know in order that they may come and fetch him, or will have himself carried back. If, however, he should die away from home the news of his death is greeted with the customary wailing, and some member of his family must visit his grave and bring back some of the earth from it; this is buried near the dead man's home and the funeral ceremonies are enacted over it as though the corpse itself were present.

761 It is the Shilluk tradition that the king should not be
682 permitted to die a natural death, but should be ceremoni-
[693] ously smothered by his womenfolk. The same is true of a chief, but whether the reasons for the killing in this case are the same as those which decide the death of the king is not clear. Certainly a chief who had been ill for a month and showed no signs of recovery would be speedily put out of the way.

[888] The custom seems to extend to other cases too; an old man would be smothered as also would be one suffering from a long and painful illness, and the same is done too, in some cases at least, shortly before death would take place naturally. I myself saw a dying boy being smothered by his own mother. She propped him up between her knees and passed her hand over his nose and mouth. I thought that she was wiping away the mucus that was coming from his nose and mouth, and it was only when he had ceased to breathe that I realized to my horror that she had killed him. When questioned about the reasons for this 'mercy' killing the Shilluk are vague and evasive. They say, for instance, that it is a humiliation for anyone to die naturally.

Births, Marriages and Deaths

95

Whatever the cause of death, burial follows at once except in the case of a king, when there is a short lying in state. If the deceased is a Nyireth or a chief, he is buried under the floor of his principal hut. A bull is killed, the meat of which is eaten by the grave-diggers, whilst the skin is cut into strips and woven across a quickly fashioned wooden, four-legged frame to make a bed or a bier. The body is washed and the head shaved. Arms, neck and waist are adorned with beads and a leopard skin fastened round the loins. The corpse is then rolled in a new white cloth and around this is bound a cow skin. It is then placed on the bed with a hen under the head. Meanwhile the work of digging the grave has been going on apace. This is a very difficult task, particularly in the dry season when the ground is as hard as concrete. The pit made is a very large one, since it has to accommodate the complete bier. It is taken down to a depth of six or seven feet and then a large cavity is cut in the side, large enough to contain the bed. The body resting on the bier is then lowered into the grave and fitted into the cavity. As this is being done the wailing of the women fills the air and the men salute the dead prince or chief, clashing their spears on their shields and singing songs in his praise. The principal wife takes two handfuls of sweepings from the floor and, standing with her back to the grave, throws them over her shoulders into the grave. Then she casts in two handfuls of mud, again standing with her back to the grave but with her hands by her sides, so that she throws the mud behind her. After the grave is filled in, all the mourners wash themselves in the river. They wear ropes round their necks as a sign of mourning, shave their heads and remove all beads and ornaments, and during the period of mourning should abstain from dancing. Four days after the burial the mourners gather again for the completion of the grave. Beer has been prepared and some if it is poured on the grave; the mound is then plastered over with mud and neatly smoothed and finished off. A short funeral dance follows after which all the mourners partake of the remainder of the beer.

766 The final ceremonies take place after an interval of a month or two. Cattle, varying in number according to the [782] eminence and wealth of the dead man's family, are driven in for sacrifice and distribution, after being slaughtered, among the participants. The men of the district march in, [535] village by village, and perform the funeral dance, first encircling the village on the outside, then saluting the tomb of the deceased; they advance, clashing spear on shield, to kneel on one knee before the grave, then retire and finally encircle the village, this time on the inside, before giving place to the next company. The whole performance is accompanied by the thudding of the drums and the chanting of [538] the praises of Nyikang and the dead prince. This dance concludes all public remembrance of the dead man. No record is made or kept of the day or month of his death and so nothing in the nature of an anniversary ceremony takes place. The hut under which he is buried is allowed to fall into ruins and thus forms a tumulus over the grave. The place is then made [778] tidy and a reed or thorn fence erected around it to preserve it from profane use.

768 The household utensils of the dead man are either
428 burned or buried on the day of the funeral, but the rest of his property, including his wives—for they are reckoned as his chattels for which he paid so many head of cattle—is inherited by his relatives according to the directions given by the deceased. If he left no instructions for the dividing of his goods everything belongs to his eldest son, but he is expected to give a share to his brothers and his father's principal male relatives, brothers and half-brothers. The dead man's spears, his canoe and the necklace of large white beads, a token of his dignity, belong to the eldest son absolutely.

764 The funeral of a common Colo and the consequent ceremonies differ in some respects from those of a Nyireth. The [565] body is washed and shaved and adorned with beads, but since no commoner is allowed to wear a leopard skin, the skin of a serval cat is fastened round the loins. If the dead